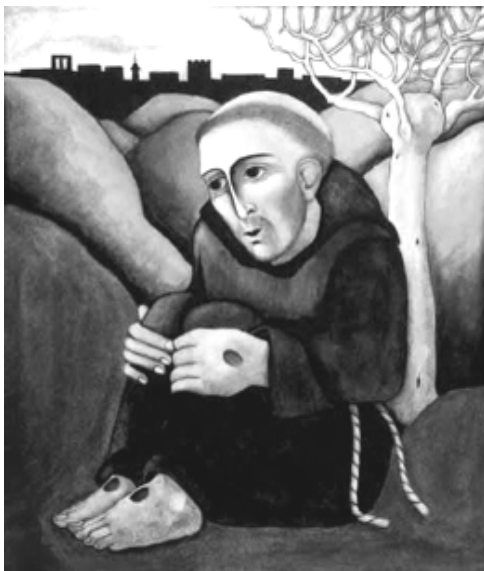


FIDDLESTICKS

Issue 149

Lent 2024



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Some Thoughts on Love

Gail Schultz, FSPA

Dear Sisters and Affiliates,

Last month this resource was on suffering as a companion to love, as a vital part of human experience, one which opens us to the outpouring of God's communion in our hearts and minds. We understand that entering into the suffering of the people and world around us opens that key within us that lets unbounded love and compassion flow with the intent of healing. Fully embracing that suffering in empathy and compassion becomes our "stigmata" – we are changed in ways that only God may fully understand.

But this month is another perspective on suffering: *Feelings of want and desire for ideas, people, and things cause us to suffer.* This in no way makes light of the tragedies of war, sickness, violence, pain. It is more about the ways we can change our unnecessary personal suffering. We agonize over thoughts we have if circumstances are not what we assumed they would be. Or the person we love doesn't reciprocate. Or what we believed to be true when we were younger has shown to be false. The ego connects these to cause us to suffer. Without our attachment to them, remarkably, the suffering dissolves.

Attachment versus Detachment

Wanting the circumstances to be a certain way is attachment. Desiring a person to be something they're not because that's what you wish and not accepting them as the beautifully imperfect human they are, is attachment. When you believe something that has proven to be false, what you always thought is attachment. When we cling to things it doesn't allow us to be at peace with what is. Because we resist what is happening, we choose to suffer. If we let go of the outcomes, we let peace and happiness enter our lives.

Attachment versus Love

Attachment is about fear and dependency and has more to do with love of self than love of another. *Love without attachment is the purest love because it isn't about what others can give you because you're empty.* ~ Yasmin Mogahed



(Continued on page 2)

Some Thoughts on Love... continued**The Need to Be Right**

Trying to prove you're right is ego-based, having to do with your fear of unworthiness. It's a lie of the ego, as we are all worthy. Be open to others and release judgment.

Let go of your attachment to being right, and suddenly your mind is more open. You're able to benefit from the unique viewpoints of others, without being crippled by your own judgment. ~ Ralph Marston

Becoming Aware of Attachments

Realizing you have an attachment is the first step in releasing it. Most of these come from our past. Ideas, beliefs, and preferences we apply to our lives repeatedly without analyzing if they are still relevant and right for us to use. This programming from our past is an automatic reaction the ego uses as it is familiar. Just like any automated reply, it can't fit each situation as they are all unique. The best response is a mindful one. Fear triggers us to close our hearts and our minds, thus closing out options. To open them up again, we need to feel safe, which is where self-care comes in. When we are compassionate to ourselves, we feel safe and can release the attachment. Reassure yourself that whatever the circumstances are, you will be stronger for them.

Learning to Detach

Detaching from our desires means that we are more concerned with the truth. Accepting others and loving them as they authentically are. We no longer fear the opinions of others. We are willing to stand up for ourselves and one another without concern about the responses we receive. Non-attachment is not the elimination of desire. It is the spaciousness to allow any quality of mind, any thought or feeling, to arise without closing around it. It is an active receptivity to the reality of life.

Detaching Eliminates Duality

Duality is a human construct that the egoic mind created to help bring order to the world. It sees everything as opposites. But this egoic perception is an illusion that keeps us trapped and suffering. We can only see reality with detachment. By no longer clinging to people or outcomes, we allow the mind to release the division. The heart only sees the whole — of humanity, of love. The separation only exists in the egoic mind. By detaching, we can embrace the whole of our authentic selves and our part in humanity. We no longer believe that we are separate and alone, and our fears subside. All duality is a mind creation. All duality is created by the clinging and attached mind. *When there is no attachment, there is no duality. ~ Osho*

Moving Forward

A lot of energy is used to fuel our clinginess. We waste time worrying about the future. We argue with others about changing to fit our ideal. But this energy is better used to detach from our programming so we can respond with an open heart. Attachments only feed the separation and duality of the fearful mind of the ego.

Clinginess is not loving others. It's about selfishness. Be aware of your fears and the ways you attach to people and outcomes. Be open to all God has to give instead of being trapped in what the ego wants. Through openness, we allow ease and peace to rule our days. Overcoming attachment does not mean becoming cold and indifferent. It means learning to have relaxed control over our mind through understanding the real causes of happiness and fulfillment - to enjoy life more and suffer less.

Reflection:

- Does the need to be right cause you problems?
- Is it problematic for you to worry about the future?
- Which of your attachments come from your past?
- How will you move forward?

Prayer:

Grant, O Lord, that my heart may neither desire nor seek anything but what is necessary for the fulfillment of Thy Holy Will. May health or sickness, riches or poverty, honors or contempt, humiliations, leave my soul in that state of perfect detachment to which I desire to attain for Thy greater honor and Thy greater glory. Amen.
(St Ignatius of Loyola)

**Lord, Thee I love with half my heart, the
world has claimed the other part.
I pray Thy name be hallowed, Lord, but want
my name to be adored.**

**Thy kingdom come, Thy reign extend, and
rain on me wealth without end.**

**Thy will be done, my lips shall pray, and
curse when I don't get my way.**

**I thank Thee for my daily bread, but cakes
and steaks I crave instead.**

**My million sins forgive, forget, while
I collect a one-cent debt.**

**From tempting evils keep us free,
unless I find they pleasure me.**

**Lord, Thee I love with half my heart,
destroy, reclaim, the other part.**





Pondering on Intentional Community Living



Living in Community by Accident

I entered Seattle University with the intention of getting a degree in Nursing. My first few months in residence were a struggle. Having lived on my own since my 14th year, I was not comfortable living with newly liberated teens. I wanted quiet; I was there to study and so after several meetings with the housing director I was moved to the 6th floor to live with the older students who with the exception of me and 3 others were nuns and priests enjoying their middle years and tending to their spiritual growth. By the end of my first quarter, it was clear that this was home and these folks were my family. I loved our routines. Mass on Sunday and Wednesday. Dinners, simple outings for a walk or a glass of wine and many intimate conversations sharing our pasts discerning our futures. By the end of our first year together I was a Theology major and had received many invitations to consider religious life but not knowing how to articulate my nature as a transgender person, I let Catholic law separate us and moved away from my home and from my church. In 2008, I reclaimed my right to go to church and have since rediscovered the sacredness of what we shared as a community in those first years of my college education.

Br. Stephan Scott Gerhardt, OEF

Ah, the heady idealistic days of college life when the world was seen as a piece of ripe fruit just waiting for us to pick and enjoy it! Your thoughts bring back memories of college and seminary experiences. ICLs can take a variety of forms, for sure. I had experiences with more than one form. My senior year of college I was blessed to actually live in a house with about 6 guys. It was more of a dorm for most, as only 33-4 of us actually shared material goods and cooked meals together. One factor united everyone, though. We were all evangelical Christians of one stripe or the other. Most but not all of us shared in regular prayer meetings in the house and a weekly charismatic Bible study. We all joined with a larger group for a weekly time of praise worship and Christian fellowship as we learned about various ministries, polished our ideals to go forth and save the world, smuggle Bibles, save drug addicts and so forth. We were bound together by a shared group think and emotional high, if nothing more. We attended a variety of church services in town without prejudice toward any particular institution.

Seminary life was one big community united by preparations for ministry. Many of us students, and spouses, lived in common apartment complexes and would frequently share meals, game nights and so forth. Many single students lived in

house dorms but were still included. We shared a lot. We pooled resources for common concerns, from helping someone with bills to transportation. I also happened to live next door to a 'Jesus People' house that was a group of hippies living a communal lifestyle and focused on a lot of street ministry. Though I often felt they thought they were being more biblical than us seminarians, I enjoyed many fellowship times and outreach efforts with this colorful crew. They were always very affirming of me and my spiritual journey.

Returning to Pennsylvania and the realities of living as a married pastor in a well-structured institutional edition of Christianity really did a number on my hopes and dreams of creating another form of intentional community. It simply became untenable. My companions in ministry seemed to generally think of ICLs as relegated to 1st C Christianity or leftovers from hippie idealism. However St. Francis continued to fuel my desire for an intentional community. But how that played out with joining OEF is another matter entirely.

Perhaps a version of an ICL for the current manifestation of OEF could be to fellowship around common ministry concerns, such as addressing immigration issues, or racism issues or hunger & homelessness issues. It seems to me that ICLs with any longevity had a focused reason beyond nurturing self-serving spiritual highs. That Christian house that was my home in college lasted maybe 2 more years before fading into history. The Jesus People eventually scattered as family growth superseded communal living. Utopian experiments throughout history in the US faded out, I think, because they were well intentioned but iconoclastic. Developing small ICLs within OEF might help to address some of the 'hunger' some of us have for a deeper sense of committed fellowship and increased communication.

DL Wirick, OEF

The things we do together in ICL and even in our local faith congregations are important community building elements. Game and movie nights with pizza and popcorn bring people together. This allows for sharing to occur, getting to know one another better, building relationships and moving forward. It is from this we can tackle projects for peace and justice, make hard decisions, dig deep into our resources to help others in times of need and just be there for each other.

Markie



WORDS FROM THE SERVANT COUNCIL



Dear OEFers,

At the beginning of Advent, your Servant Council planted a seed for you to be thinking about our Lenten reflections for 2024. Hopefully, that seed has germinated a little bit. But in case you've forgotten, we'd like to add some rapid growth fertilizer to it. (To keep you captivated all the way to the end---how-to information is listed at the bottom of this missive.)

This year for Lent, we'd like to have a penitential time of reflecting on our conversations at Chapter this past summer. We had agreed to pray, reflect, study, question, and act on the work we have been doing for some time regarding anti-racism and anti-white supremacy. We made a decision to respond individually and share communally as an encouragement and challenge to each other.

We would like to gather your stories and testimonies to share with the Order during Lent. That means you have several weeks to write a reflection or record a short 1-2 minute video about how you have responded in your life to the problem of racism. To help you get started, some questions you could address in your reflection are listed at the end.

We have set up an online file for you to upload your reflections on the Servant Council Google Drive. The link to it is here: [2024 Lenten Reflections](#). Look for the file "How To Upload Videos and Files to Google Drive" for help. If that proves troublesome, please just email your reflection to Sr. Magdalena at acmstebbing@gmail.com.

Please feel free to reach out to the Servant Council for questions or encouragement on this little project. Make a video, write a story, write a poem, paint a picture. Fulfill your promise on this project with creativity! We will create a Lenten calendar to share with the Order. **Please have your reflection submitted by March 31.**

In Peace and All Good,
Magdalena & The Servant Council

Questions to Guide Your Reflection

- What's your ethnic and religious heritage? Do you have a story about someone in your family standing up against injustice?
- What's your earliest memory of becoming aware that some people looked different from you?
- What's your earliest memory of becoming aware of racism?
- What's your earliest memory of becoming aware of your own white identity?
- What's one way you think your life would have been different had you been born another race?
- What privileges do you have that others do not?
- What privileges do you NOT have that others do?
- What's one privilege you never want to give up?
- Talk about a time when someone else said or did something racist and you interrupted it.
- Talk about a time when someone else did or said something racist and you didn't speak up and why.
- Describe a situation in which you sought approval or reassurance from a person/people of color?
- Describe a situation in which you kept your distance from a person/people of color because you feared being disliked or rejected?
- How do you typically respond when someone is angry at you?

Words from the Servant Council... continued

- What do you think of when you hear the term white supremacy?
- How does it make you feel when a person of color calls something you did or said racist?
- What's something you have done to make things right after you learned that your actions had racist outcomes?
- What's one embarrassing mistake you hope never to make with a person of another race?
- What is one way you think you could connect with white people who have differing views about race? •
- Is there anything, no matter how small, that you are willing to commit to doing to end racism that you are not already doing?

Chapter 2024

Registration forms (paper/online) will soon be available for our June 27-30 2024 Chapter/Convocation at Pallottine Renewal Center in Florissant, MO. Early arrivals are welcome on Wednesday, June 26, after 2:00pm.

Registration begins May 1 and ends June 10th. Markie Oliver is our contact person for registration. She can be reached by phone or text (765) 212-4071; email: markie.f.oliver@gmail.com or snail mail: 300 S. Morrison Blvd. Muncie, IN 47304.

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you that OEF, as a whole, did answer the call for increased donations to help support having an outside tech team working with us again this year at C/C. Donations were up significantly. For that, we thank you very much. We will be using Arch Audio again for our tech needs and support. We have been blessed these last couple of years to have been

able to utilize the financial reserve that was banked from the COVID years and not charge a registration fee for C/C. We can all relate to post COVID inflation across the board. Overall expenses increase with each passing year. We would like to thank Nancy Menning, our treasurer, for her diligence and ability to guide us through all of the financials of being a non-profit. With all that said, we find it necessary to ask for a registration fee of \$175 per person with a Thursday arrival on June 27th. If you are planning to be an early arrival on Wednesday, June 26th, the fee is \$225 per person. If you plan to attend online, a \$35 registration fee will be required. Once you complete your registration, Nancy will send you an invoice for payment. Do not try and pay your registration fee through Wild Apricot. These fees are well under OEF historical norms. Should you find these fees not within your budget PLEASE reach out so assistance can be provided. You can contact Nancy Menning at: nancy.menning@gmail.com; (607) 351-0307

You will find C/C this year to have more opportunities for fellowship, small group gatherings and free time for whatever the Holy Spirit places on your heart. Let's not forget about the Juniper Cup! More itinerary details will be shared as we get closer to June.

Your Servant Council
Ron, Petra, Kathy, Owusu, Magdalena, Deb

**Chapter invitation and registration form are on the*

An Important Reminder

Reminder! Nancy Menning is the OEF Treasurer. Contributions can be made by sending a check to Nancy (made out to "Order of Ecumenical Franciscans") at:

**Order of Ecumenical Franciscans
c/o Nancy Menning, Treasurer
3175 Duke Snider Ave.
Eugene, OR 97402**





A FEW REFLECTIONS ON RACISM & INJUSTICE



Do you have a story about someone in your family standing up against injustice?

I'm from a very mixed background and largely non-religious upbringing - I met God in the woods. My family tend to be oblivious of injustices they experience (Mom still doesn't understand she got pulled over in the summer for speeding while Latina because this "white" side of my family doesn't know where their darker tones are from and doesn't think about it. My cousins my age are more aware but largely let things slide off a salesmanship upbringing from my uncle... I was the one who watched, and was told not to make a scene. That's how we "handled" it.

Mir

A Movement toward Us

Dear community, I am not one to put much on our Chat, I just do not do it. So for me to write this says it is important. Some time ago I saw a call for people sharing their reflections on our discussions surrounding racism, white supremacy, white privilege, and patriarchal dynamics. This aspect of the Chapter of 2023 discussions have been a daily source of reflection for me. I believe the Spirit of God is involved in what is occurring in our Community.

So let me say this, I am in recovery. I cannot say that I have regained my innocence of the Us as yet. But I realize that I have many, many tapes within what would speak against any concept of Us. I come from a family where racism and white privilege ran rampant and still does among some of my siblings. I know better, this community and reading is constantly reminding me of the God who create us all as one, all as brothers and sisters and Francis of Assisi who called all brother and sister.

So, recovery for me is realizing that through God's mercy and love I can regain a sense of Us. I have been following a twelve-step program for recovery from racism. I am using these tools to help in the other areas of my life such as white privilege and other prejudices that are within.

Recovery is an important process for me so that I can do something about what is outside of myself. It is giving me a boldness to stand against language and actions that speak against the sense of Us.

I wanted to be honest in this little reflection. Recovery for me will be a lifetime process. There are too many tapes within that I have to challenge and silence. In doing so I am beginning to hear the heart of God, who calls me and us to a sense of the Us which lives in the Common Home given as Pope Francis might say. So I ask for your support in this recovery, so I can witness to the truth of what we said as a community last summer and I hope we adopt fully at this coming chapter.

Peace
Louis

Bro Louis I find this framing of the 12 Steps to be brilliant in applying it to societal addiction. I read, eons ago, a marvelous book called, When Society Becomes an Addict by Anne Wilson Schaef. She did not apply it to racism but to all things consumed in our culture. But your taking it to this level is so applicable. It gives me a different reference and bag of tools for addressing racism, drive for power and control and so much else. Thank you for sharing your own journey and this inspired insight.

DL Wirick

Reflections on Racism and Injustice... continued

Thanks for this, Br. David W., especially for the book suggestion. I think there are aspects of addiction in Euro-centric racism, especially around power and self-worth, and manifesting in the amazing difficulty of just being able to say "white people are no better than anybody else, and have something to learn from everybody else." Anything that is that hard to let go of functions in part as an addiction, I think.

Peace & blessing,
David Rensberger

Louis,

Your reflection really moved me. I also grew up in a racist family. I lived in an area that was virtually all white. I clearly remember the first time I saw a black person and asking my mother if he was made of chocolate. (It was probably loud enough for him to hear me and probably embarrassed my mother but chocolate was the only thing that made sense to me. Except that I knew chocolate doesn't move. I hope he took it as a compliment or just found it funny.)

My dad often told black "jokes" or used racist language. My brother still does. I can speak up if a member of my birth family says something racist. (Though they seldom do so around me.)

My husband went to a city high school that had just started bringing in black students from outside the area. Of course those students felt a need to establish themselves and as high school students can often be cruel, my husband started getting beaten up daily. Teachers would turn a blind eye. His parents told him that if he ignored it, they would stop. They didn't. On one occasion, 10 black students tried to drag him into the mens room to rape him. (Of course none of this really had anything to do with race, but with a number of other cultural and biological issues (By biological I am thinking of the many poor choices teens make.) These daily physical beatings and verbal beatings caused him to become severely depressed and to

strongly consider suicide. He still battles depression to this day.

However, the result is that he became quite racist. (He seemed to have overcome it during our dating years and the first 15-20 years of our marriage. But the last 20+ years he has become much more racist but if I try to speak out against it and support the equality of all people, it only causes a loud, nasty fight and he digs in his heels in support of racism even more. So if he says something, I pretend I didn't hear it.

In many ways I feel badly that I am unable to keep that part of OEF's promise to speak out against racism.

Crystal, n/OEF

Crystal and all who have shared this far-

Crystal, I can relate to your life story, very much so. Those of you who journeyed through Sacred Ground with me already know my history. I grew up in Marion, IN. Marion is part of Indiana and national history that recorded the hanging of 3 young black men on the town square on August 7, 1930. A mob broke into the local jail, beat and hung these young men for an alleged shooting of a white man and rape of the man's fiancée (she later decanted her statement).

My dad was extremely prejudice towards every ethnicity. I received very mixed signals growing up. We were Catholic and sat in the pew every Sunday. We even had a cross burned in our front yard by the local KKK, which really upset my dad, and yet our household language was curse words and ethnic slurs all day long.

I've struggled with the thought of me living a privileged life when I've had to watch my parents who didn't even finish high school eek out a living, hating the world around them, hating people of any color and the icing on the cake... dodging physical, mental, emotional and sexual abuse from my father (I was adopted at age 2).

(Continued on page 8)

Reflections on Racism and Injustice... continued

Needless to say I had my hands full at a very young age. I've worked very hard to shatter that whole family dynamic. Sacred Ground helped me even more to wake up to the fact that in spite of my past.....I'm white, I attended parochial school, I always had a roof over my head and food on my table. I never had to think twice about what could happen to me after "sundown" for the color of my skin, or any other life experience that could be judged for the color of my skin. My skin tone was/is my privileged existence in this country.

Louis- I will work a 12 step model to continue the healing process and open my eyes further to privilege and oppression of every kind. Thank you for sharing. Thanks to all of my OEF siblings who help me grow, heal and become a better Franciscan who desires to live a true gospel to life and life to gospel way!

Peace and Prayers Always-Deb OEF

Louis,

I have noted previously that I am also in a 12 step program and the steps are a way of deep humility, if we are graced to follow them.

You mentioned you follow a 12 step way to heal from racism. Do you know of any literature around a 12 step program to recover from racism?

Mike Asbury, n/OEF

One version of utilization of the twelve step program to address racism:

<https://practicetransformation.umn.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Recovery-from-White-Conditioning-PPT.pdf>

Br. Samuel

OEF Council statement after January 6 on White Christian Nationalism and Patriarchy

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans is dedicated to following the way of Jesus of Nazareth as laid out particularly in the four gospels. We know that the law of love is at the center of Jesus' teaching that all people are children of God, loved of God. Boundaries of gender, race, language, and creed have no importance in God's ever-present love.

The Order of Ecumenical Franciscans rejects any notion of a White Christianity, a White nation, or a Christianity rooted in patriarchy. The idea that God would endorse the notion of the United States as a "White Christian nation rooted in patriarchy" is blasphemous and has no place in the Good News of Jesus of Nazareth. We know that the current racial injustice in the US and around the world is a deep offense to God.

We are committed to living in ways that effectively dismantle racism in the diverse institutions that structure our social and public life together. Following our Principles, members will include in our personal rules of life a commitment to actively work to build a human community based on racial and gender justice. The Order will engage in prayer, study, and discussion as to how to undo the history of "Christian patriarchal white supremacy" as a central tenet of our call to follow Jesus and live under the Spirit of God.





OEF Annual Chapter & Convocation

JUNE 27-30, 2024
PALLOTTINE RENEWAL CENTER
FLORISSANT, MO

Online registration
May 1st thru June 10th



**2024 OEF Chapter and Convocation Registration for June 26th-30th
at Pallottine Renewal Center, Florissant, MO, US**

Please Print

Name _____ Pronouns _____

Email _____ Cell Phone _____

Will you be joining us by Zoom ____No ____Yes What time zone _____

If joining us In-person please continue to fill out this form.

Arrival day: ____ Wed. ____Thurs.

Arriving by: ____ Car ____ Bus ____Train ____Plane

If arriving by bus, train or plane, send as soon as possible the time of arrival and which carrier.

Room: _____Standard room is a single room with 2 twin beds

_____Couple's room with a queen bed

Would you be willing to share a standard room? ____No ____Yes With whom?

Other room needs:

Food: ____Vegetarian ____Vegan ____Carnavore ____Gluten Free

_____Lactose Free Food Allergies:

Communion: ____Wine ____Grape Juice ____Gluten Free Bread

Emergency contact person and cell phone number:

General info: Are there Allergies that we might need to know?

Are there any physical accommodations that we need to know about to provide a better experience at C/C? Is there anything else you want us to know?



A Few Good Reads



Biographies of St. Francis of Assisi

Here's my quick take on ten, and then some. Most, of course, have the same title...

GK Chesterton--whatever you read by him, expect paradox, wit, and insight. (The caveat is that he tends to write about everything *but* his biographical subjects--see Adam Gopnik's astute New Yorker critique of GKC.) "Popular" if quirky and mannered account for what was arguably a far more erudite, if elite, educated readership than that dominating our age, published exactly a century ago.

Omar Englebert, OFM: another early 20c take, straightforward. Many formatters assign this to their inquirers. I'd classify it under "spiritual reading" more than what scholars have presented to us since. Still, a pioneering attempt, as was this next one:

Paul Sabatier--a third even earlier take--it made the Vatican's "blacklist" in 1894. Inevitably, scholarship has "adjudicated" these two volumes' assertions--Jon Sweeney recently re-packaged and edited this (I guess it's in the public domain now) as The Road To Assisi.

Murray Bodo, OFM--*The Journey + the Dream* sketches impressions. Dated from a *Brother Sun* etc p-o-v, but assists meditation.

Julien Green--*God's Fool* never comes up in any list, but it was one of the first bios I read and I liked it.

Donald Spoto--another overlooked "popular" one, but I found his reliance on primary sources + scholars wise.

Adrian House--same here, but he pitches his take more at today's skeptic or secular seeking to get beyond the myths.

Andre Vauchez--academic but readable, 2010's take by a leading medievalist; useful for research.

Chiara Mercuri--subtitled "the hidden story." Couldn't figure out what had been until now occluded, but not bad.

Augustine Thompson, OP. (I agree with Reddit review here): The best contemporary study by far. If far more sober.

I don't recommend St. Boneventure's treatment as a first place to start, although many readers understandably assume to begin here. That great friar wrote with an agenda, as did Thomas of Celano, and we new or latecomers need context

(see next paragraph).

While the tales gathered as Little Flowers may appear another logical choice, I'd study it in the spirit of modern scholarship.

Primary sources--1972's big red jumbled Omnibus of the lot; handy but lacks commentary and frameworks.

Francis--Early Documents etc. Three vols. plus index v. 4. Joint project by some of the leading Franciscan scholars, more of an academic compilation, certainly more up-to-date, and necessary for serious students. You can find the series, with its "sister" volume from Clare, online at the Franciscan Sources site c/o St Bonaventure's U. among their Franciscan Intellectual Tradition archives.

William Hugo OFM Cap.'s *Workbook* for serious students on these sources is now calibrated to these volumes.

Francis & Clare: vol. in the Paulist Press Western Spirituality series; a lot cheaper, compact and a solid starting point.

A couple of others I have not read that I mean to...more experimental rather than factual.

Nikos Kazantzakis--novelization as if by Brother Leo; it's recommended by more than one Franciscan to me.

Carlo Carretto--semi-fictional, echoes with an early 70s denim-kumbaya-Godspell vibe, but may assist reflection.

A new study by Michael Cusato OFM on *Francis' Life, Vision and Companions* will be published presently.

An Italian o/l short lessons w/guidance notes, written for OFM postulants by Noel Muscat OFM. Unfortunately it's in Italian. But I think there may be an English equivalent? Go to this link below and then a pdf can be downloaded:

<https://franciscanstudies.files.wordpress.com/2018/09/history-franciscan-movement-01.pdf>

Compare or contrast with this reviewer's take. He tilts w/some telling choices to the hagiographical or "birdbath Francis."

I hope this assists you, and perhaps others who, like me, are seeking our Gospel calling in the path of St. Francis.

Blessings this Eastertide,
Seaghán Ó Murchú n/OEF





Formation Station



Introducing:

Heather Owens

Hello! My name is Heather Owens, and I live in Owensboro, KY with my husband, Mike, my mother-in-law, Marie, and our cat, Phil. I love God, and find so much joy in being His beloved, and Him being mine! I think of everyone I meet as an extension of this primary and beautiful connection!

I love to paint, hike and take silly photos. I work as a librarian in an urban library and enjoy the opportunity this provides to treat all souls gently and with kindness.

I cannot wait to meet you! I am so drawn to the gentle love of St. Francis and the intense ardor of Clare for Christ. The first story I ever heard of St. Francis was the story of the wolf he tamed with love and kindness. There are so many wolves that need taming in our hearts and in our world, and the answer lies in the simplicity of loving at all times. I look forward to learning how to do this more and more from all of your examples!

Peace and all good.



Heather (center),
husband Mike &
Mother-in-Love, Marie

Reed Fowler

Hello! I'm Reed (they/he pronouns). I serve as an ELCA pastor in Apple Valley, MN, and live in a small queer-centered intentional secular community in St. Paul, MN, with my spouse, our three cats, and our dog. I am a weaver, spinner, knitter, sewist, and gardener. I've been attending the OEF Bible Study on and off for a handful of years thanks to the recommendation of Br. JM, and have been so grateful for that space, and its role in

introducing me to the OEF! I appreciate how this community strives to hold each other accountable in love, and am curious about the ways the life and ministry of St. Francis and St. Clare will continue to provoke, comfort, and shape me, in their queerness, in their playfulness, in their devotion, all for the sake of the Gospel.

Pete Mayo

I was baptized Roman Catholic as an infant and attended catholic elementary school. I graduated from a state university with a degree in accounting. But soon after that I began to explore religious life and entered the Order of Friars Minor. My interest was always spirituality and especially forms of meditation. I stayed in Franciscan formation for 7 years before deciding God was calling me elsewhere. I completed M. Div. and M.A. in Spirituality from Catholic Theological Union, Chicago. I completed 4 units of Clinical Pastoral Education with Baptist medical Centers in Birmingham, Alabama. That was about when I met my wife. We have been married for 30 years. I served three years as hospice chaplain with Vitas Hospice. I served 27 years as chaplain, director and manager of Formation in acute care hospital settings. I have a deep appreciation for different cultures and religions, especially Yoga, Buddhism, Judaism, China, India, and Japan. My interests include classical guitar, flutes of Japan and India. It has now been about 45 years since I started meditation. Through it all I have felt close to St Francis even though he is demanding and challenging. He reminds me that no matter what happens in life, the love of God is all we really need. And we can have it in abundance.

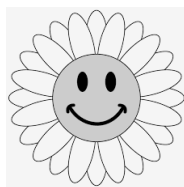
Kathy McDonald

Hi, I'm Kathy McDonald and I come from Cincinnati, Ohio. I'm searching for an inclusive spiritual community that values social action, caring for creation, and welcomes people
(Continued)

Formation Station... continued

marginalized from society. I have always been attracted to the Franciscan theology and spirit, so I was professed in the Catholic Church many years ago at my local Franciscan parish. However, due to some changes in the Archdiocese here, I drifted away from it. Since then, I have missed the Franciscan spirit and felt called to reach out to you and learn more. My passion is caring for creation. I am leading a non-profit group in Ohio that promotes the use of native plants in landscapes to support local wildlife and increase biodiversity. We contribute conference proceeds to local conservation efforts."

Welcome, one and all!!!



OEF Online Bible Study

The weekly OEF Bible Study has moved to Tuesday, at 7:30 pm EST. *Note the Time change!* You can join the study on Zoom:

Topic: OEF Bible Study Time:

This is a recurring meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89760718708?pwd=N2ROTHcrWUpWSzlyM2N3eEdG-dEF0QT09>

Meeting ID: 897 6071 8708 - password - oef

7:30-8:30 PM EST,

6:30-7:30 PM CST,

5:30-6:30 PM MST

5:30-6:30 PM MST (Arizona),

4:30-5:30 PM PST

7:30-8:30 PM Ecuador

12:30 AM -1:30 AM Friday in Ireland

9:30-10:30 AM Friday in Japan.

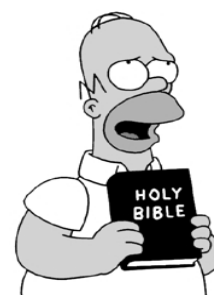
1:30 PM - 2:30 PM Friday in New Zealand

We study the Gospel for the coming Sunday as listed on the *Revised Common Lectionary*. We use the "African Method" Bible Study: Read the passage, everyone picks the word or phrase that stands out for them. Read the passage again (in a different translation), everyone identifies how this impacts them as a person. Read the passage a third time (in a third translation) and everyone identifies how this impacts us as a community. Then time for general sharing on the passage.

You will need a computer or a smart phone with a headset (and a camera would be good) to participate. I will give a brief ZOOM tutorial as we meet, and can help people before the meeting gets connected. We can talk on the phone as we work things out.

You are most welcome to join!

Br. Juniper, OEF





Lifelong Formation Station



We would like to say THANK YOU to all who attended our OEF Zoom Advent Service on December 9th. We had a great turnout along with visiting Franciscan siblings from other tertiary orders. They joined us in prayer and worship as we made ready our hearts once again to receive our Lord, making room and preparing the manger within ourselves, finding Peace in an otherwise chaotic world.

We completed our book study *Compassion, Living in the Spirit of St. Francis* by Ilia Delio, OSF. We had 10 siblings sign up. We met every Monday evening, beginning on October 9th and ending on December 18th. The beauty of this book was that each chapter was independent and could stand alone so if some folks could not make a session, they would not be lost when they were able to attend. Our discussions were often times deep and Spiritually filling. A few excerpts from Chapter 5 (The Seeds of Compassion): *"We live in an age of 'globalized superficiality'...the word Compassion in Tibetan literally means 'noble heart'...we need a new set of values today that can unify us, link us heart to heart...to feel the quivering of the heart in response to another's suffering...Compassion is the ability to 'get inside the skin of another' in order to respond with loving concern and care...we breathe in the pain of the other and breathe out compassion"*.

Compassion is an action word. We know this if we dare to "get inside the skin" of our Lord, Jesus Christ, our brother Francis and sister Clare and experience our world from their quivering hearts, through their eyes and emulate their level of love and compassion for the suffering of humanity. As we begin to enter into our Lenten practices may we seek intentional

examination of the heart! How and when do our hearts quiver, personally and as an Ecumenical Franciscan Order? We have many Faith walks to draw from in our order. This Lent the Lifelong Formation Team has invited Bruce (Quaker), Neal (Unitarian) and Katie (Baptist) to share with us their approach and practices for plumbing the depths of our Spirituality! May we all take time to breathe in deeply, tread the waters of our hearts and ascend to breathe out the love of Christ and Francis and Clare to all those suffering physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually in this world of war, oppression and pain of every type. May our hearts quiver, may our actions be that of love and compassion.

We wish to thank all of you who were able to attend our Zoom Lenten Service on February 17th A HUGE Thank You to Neal Dunnigan, Katie Cook and Bruce James for their participation and sharing their Faith journey with us all. It was a special event that encouraged us to explore the depths of our Spirituality during this Lenten Season through the eyes and heart of various Faith walks. What a true Blessing!

Your Lifelong Formation Team

Dale, Stephan, Reg, Deb





An invitation

Sibs,

On March 12th, Marilynne Robinson will see her newest book, *Genesis*, released. *Genesis* is one of the books of the library of the Bible that is a favorite of mine. Using Robinson's work as a guide, please join me and Nancy Menning in a study of *Genesis*. I encourage you to get the book in advance of the class. Once I get my copy, I'll let those interested know what to read prior to the first class. We will begin this work on **April 7th at 4 pm central**. Let me know if you have questions or if you would like to join us in this work!

Brother Samuel

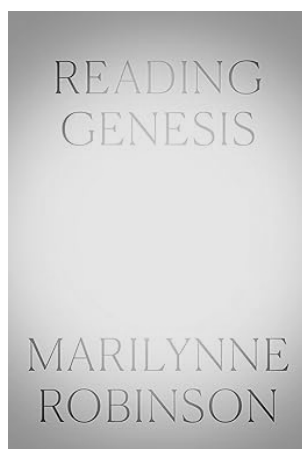
To be clear, sibs, the title of Marilynne Robinson's new book is **Reading Genesis**.

E-book copies are only \$14.99.

You can read an excerpt of the opening pages at this website:

<https://us.macmillan.com/books/9780374613440/readinggenesis>

Nancy Menning



Fellowship News

**From our earlier discussion on Intentional Community Living (Page 3):*

(ICL) is certainly what is behind having Fri. morning prayer together on Zoom, as well as asking folks to read a book on Francis and just share their basic short reflection on what they read on the oef-chat.

I certainly think we could create a game night on Zoom if someone was willing to find a game that could be done online.

And I do want to announce that there will be a dinner/lunch/breakfast/meal/drinks/snacks on zoom for anyone to attend on **Sat. March 9th at 5pm ET US** I will send Zoom info later.

Meals, especially evening dinners and Sun. midday meals were essential to my past ICL experience. These were the most likely the best things we did together even with some drama that comes with doing things together.

Peace and all good,

Markie



Introducing: OEF Trans Fellowship

Dear Siblings, we'd like to announce that we are forming a Trans Fellowship within OEF. We have been talking during recent events and find that our common experience, and common discoveries about finding ourselves in the Bible, Gospel, Christ, Spirit, etc. as Trans followers of Christ, are creating really valuable exchanges of understanding and living into our faiths. If you'd like to be part of this fellowship, please contact:

Petra, Jacoba, Stephan, or Mir.





Reflections on My Life as An Ally

Katie Cook



First, I apologize for the length of this reflection. I could have included a lot more, but I didn't think you'd want to wade through it. My story begins in the 1950s. I think I chose myself as an ally to African Americans before I ever knew what that word was or what it meant.

My first realization that racism existed in my small Texas Panhandle town was in a movie theater, when I looked up and saw that all of the black people were sitting in the balcony. I asked about this, and my parents explained it when we got home. My father had played on an integrated baseball team from the time I was an infant (1953), and I was surprised that other people didn't just DO things with Black people. They explained that there were a lot of people who didn't think the way we did, who thought Black people weren't as good as white people. When we watched the March on Washington and Dr. King's speech on television, they told me that some people hated Dr. King. Part of their message was, "We want you to do the right thing, but it's not going to be easy."

My next chapter came in the sixth grade (1962), when our schools were integrated, and I was ostracized and punished by most of the white girls for treating the Black girls the same as everybody else. I was actually trying to treat them a little better, to make up for the others. Some of you know me well enough to know that that threat just made me dig in my heels.

When I got to college in Waco, I joined the Ninth Street Baptist Mission in a mostly African American neighborhood, and I spent my next five years ministering in that mission. My first youth group as a minister was made up mostly of people of color. In 1974, I took some of them back to my home town to do a Vacation Bible school in "the flats," on the "bad" side of the tracks. (I'm not going to tell you what some people called the neighborhood.) My youth, coming from their impoverished neighborhood were appalled at the living conditions in "the flats." At one point, I took my youth, who were accustomed to eating in any restaurant they chose, to one where I had waited tables in high school, and the people came running out,

waving their arms, and saying the restaurant was closed. It wasn't, and I hope to God my youth didn't know that. It then occurred to me why the African American cook ate in the kitchen when I was serving. That broke my heart—for my youth, and for the cook, who was incredibly good to me, in spite of my cluelessness.

In the summer of 1972, I "did" my summer missions tour with the Home Mission Board in south downtown Kansas City, Missouri. With my glow-in-the-dark blonde hair, I was the only white person in a 50-block radius for pretty much the whole summer. I lived with a Black woman, Mrs. Ealy, whom I loved. My partner for the summer, Regina, was a young Black student whom I also loved. And I attended Pleasant Green Baptist Church, an African American church. Mrs. Ealy would say, "We pleasant, but we ain't green," and smile slyly at me, as if to say, "Not even you." The people I met that summer were honest about their bad experiences with white people and with the system, but they seemed to understand that I was there to try to help, in my own feeble way.

In all of these steps on my journey, I learned more and more about my own privilege, and I am forever grateful for the people who treated my clueless self gently. One of those was Rev. Robert Gilbert, a pastor in Waco with whom I worked in the Ministerial Alliance and on Habitat for Humanity committees. Robert was the first African American graduate (in 1968) from Baylor. By 1992, Robert was so disabled that he needed a "ghost writer" to help him write the one book he thought he had left in him before he died. He asked me to do it with him, and we finished all of the interviews that year. In it, he talked about some of his experiences with prejudice.

Robert died before I was finished with the manuscript. I then worked with his wife to finish the book and get it published in 1993. Last April, Baylor placed a statue of Robert in front of the religion building. His son—who is

My Life as An Ally... continued

the Dean of the Howard University Divinity School in Washington, DC—and I worked hard together to get a second edition of Robert's book out before the statue unveiling, and his family made sure I was there on the front row to see it. I wasn't expecting it, I didn't deserve it, but they overwhelmed me with love.

Somewhere in the early 1990s, I was president of the Ministerial Alliance, and I organized an interfaith Martin Luther King, Jr. worship service. I did that for several years. I got threatening phone calls

In 1994, when I first attended the Summer Conference of the Baptist Peace Fellowship (aka "Peace Camp"), I was leading the youth with Jackie Saxon, who is now the Executive Minister for the American Baptist Churches of the Midwest, and who is also African American. Back in Peace Camp in 1994, we couldn't get the kids' attention, so I blurted out, "My name is Katie Cook, and this is Jackie Saxon. We are identical twins, separated at birth." That got their attention, and, to this day, Jackie is my Twin. We travel together and room together at meetings. People have even joked with us all these years, pretending they can't tell us apart. I trust with every fiber of my being that, if I step out of line in terms of race relationships, Jackie will let me know in no uncertain terms. And she is not the only one.

I continue to try to learn about my own privilege, about systemic racism and unconscious hidden racism, but I don't do it to weigh myself down with guilt. Penance, yes. But I don't think it is productive or right to flagellate myself; I think I should use that energy to continue to learn to be a better ally.



An Image in A Mirror

Credits to Jim Finley CAC - shared in local life group and wanted to share w/y'all

"Imagine that you are looking at yourself in a full-length mirror. And imagine, too, that this image of yourself in the full-length mirror is conscious. It's a thinking, reflective, conscious image of you. And, imagine that this conscious image of you has been through a lot of therapy. It's taken a number of self-help workshops. It has read a lot.

And, it thinks the time has come that it can move on its own, without you.

You try to explain to the image of you that you don't think things will go well for it without you – because it's an image of you!

The image will hear nothing of it. 'You're just trying to hold me back. I'm branching out on my own.'

And so, to gently prove your point, you step half way off the side of the mirror and half the image disappears.

The image has a panic attack. It has to go back into therapy and says to the therapist, 'I'm not real, I'm not real. I was trying so hard to be real, and I thought I was.'

Now the image is real, it just isn't real in the way the image was trying to be real.

And Eckhart says, this is the way it is with us with God. That Infinite Love in an act of love creates us in the image and likeness of Love for Love's sake alone. Moment by moment, moment by moment, the generosity of God is poured out into our life, such that we ARE the generosity of God. Apart from and other than the infinite generosity of God, we are nothing. We are nothing at all."

Salachar





Fiddlesticks
c/o Christine Petersen, OEF
934 Round Oak Ct.
Nekoosa, WI 54457
U.S.A.

**Articles for the Eastertide Issue are being accepted immediately. The deadline is April 15, 2024*

An Excerpt from “Three Prayers” *

by Victoria Tester

And as for our guest brother cricket, who only
 played his rounds of good mornings,
 who only counted rising notes
 in his small tidy corner of air,
 they tore apart his violin, our only violin,
 thereby breaking his lonely brown heart,
 thereby haunting my lonely, speckled heart,
 and went back to fat cushions, satisfied
 my broom would do the rest.
 Tell me, little cricket, how will we ever carry
 our one shared suitcase up to Mount Alverna?



How will we sit under pines where eight
 hundred years ago
 a tattered man in a brown robe took two sticks
 and played our violin and sang in French?
 How will we sing in French together
 because the sun is rising and God is on our
 breaths?



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